GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:215
ANSWERED ON:06.08.2001
INCREASING POLLUTION OF INDIAN RIVERS
BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether pollution in major rivers in the country has assumed serious proportions;

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating the results of studies conducted in this regard in India and abroad; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to remedy the situation?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU)

(a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement in respect of parts (a) to (c) of reply to Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 215 to be answered on 06.08.2001 regarding Increasing Pollution of Indian Rivers

(a) & (b) The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is monitoring water quality at 507 locations covering all major rivers in the country. The results of these studies indicate that the water quality is degraded in stretches of the rivers especially where large urban centres are located. This is mainly due to discharge of untreated wastewater from the towns/cities followed by reduced flow conditions due to over abstraction of surface and ground water in the basin of the rivers. The details of the identified polluted stretches of major and medium/ minor rivers are at Annexure.

In April 1995 a comprehensive evaluation of the Ganga Action Plan Phase I was undertaken jointly by a team consisting of representatives of the Aligarh Muslim University, Roorkee University, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta.The Evaluation Report has concluded that Ganga Action Plan as conceived and implemented is an appropriate programme for application to other river basins. The reduction of discharge of organic matters, a necessary first step in restoring the water quality, has been achieved to fair level. In January 1998, a cost benefit analysis of the Ganga Action Plan Phase I was undertaken by a team consisting of representatives from Metroeconomica, UK, and some Indian Institutes viz. Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi, Indian Toxicology Research Centre, Lucknow and All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health Calcutta. The broad conclusion of the study is that inspite of its many shortcomings, the Ganga Action Plan has delivered significant benefits to India. The polluted stretch of the river violating the bathing class standards would have been atleast 740 Kms. between Kannauj and Varanasi as compared to 437 Kms. between the same towns with the Ganga Action Plan, Phase I.Both users and non-users have been benefited and the result is that the real rate of return on Phase-I is well about 10% required of public sector projects. Also in terms of both the cost and time taken, Ganga Action Plan compares favourably with those of the other major rivers of the World like Thames, Rhine and Danube.

(c) The steps taken for prevention and control of pollution are as follows:

(i) Under National River Conservation Plan, polluted stretches of 27 major rivers have been taken up for pollution abatement in 151 towns spread over 16 States at an estimated cost of Rs. 3318 crore. The list of these rivers is at part `A` of the Annexure referred to above.

(ii) The important pollution abatement works taken up under the National River Conservation Plan include;

- Interception and diversion works to capture the raw sewage flowing into the river through open drains and divert them for treatment.
- Sewage Treatment Plants for treating the diverted sewage.
- Low Cost sanitation works to prevent open defecation on riverbanks.
- Electric crematoria and Improved Wood Crematoria to conserve the use of wood and help in ensuring proper cremation of bodies brought to the burning ghats.
- River Front Development works such as improvement of bathing ghats etc.
- Other minor miscellaneous works.

(iii) Cities and towns discharging wastewater in the major and medium/minor rivers are identified for preparation of action plan. The list of these rivers is at part `B` of the Annexure referred to above.

(iv) Grossly polluting industries are being monitored for the discharge of their effluents into rivers and lakes.

(v) A Scheme for setting up of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETP) in clusters of small scale industrial units has been taken up.